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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000193

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DHAKA FOR P/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/18/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NL](#) [SU](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT: QATAR DESCRIBES PRE-SUMMIT  
POLITICS

REF: DOHA 177

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

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(C) KEY POINTS  
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-- MFA Minister of State Ahmed Al-Mahmoud told Ambassador March 18 that (unidentified) Arab League members are trying to have the upcoming Arab League summit shifted to Khartoum, rather than Doha, in order to show solidarity with President Omar al-Bashir, for whom the International Criminal Court recently issued an arrest warrant.

-- Al-Mahmoud made it clear than Qatar is resisting the venue shift and that Qatar would prefer that al-Bashir not attend the Summit at all. Qatar invited Al-Bashir because it concluded that Qatar had to follow Arab League rules and protocols and invite all 22 Arab League members to the annual summit, he said.

-- Al-Mahmoud was also very clear about the attendance of Hama leader Khalid Mish'al: Mish'al would not be invited, and he would not attend. Only Arab leaders and certain international organizations could attend (see reftel).

-- On a separate issue, Al-Mahmoud confirmed news reports that Egypt had objected to Qatar's participation in the recent "mini-summit" held in Riyadh, saying that Qatar "had some questions to answer" regarding alleged Qatari effort to destabilize Egypt. Qatar agreed to discuss the accusations, but the parties were unable to reach an agreement that would have allowed Qatar's participation in Riyadh.

End Key Points.

1. (C) In a March 18 meeting with Ambassador, MFA Minister of State Ahmed bin Abdulla Al-Mahmoud said there is a move underway by unidentified Arab countries to move the March 30 Arab League Summit from Doha to Khartoum. The change of venue would be designed to show Arab solidarity with the people of Sudan and President Omar al-Bashir, currently the subject of an ICC arrest warrant. He stated that if such a decision was taken by the Arab League, the Summit would still be under Qatar's presidency.

2. (C) Al-Mahmoud noted that he recently attended an Arab League follow-up meeting in Damascus with representatives of Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Oman, and Libya to discuss the upcoming Summit. He said that it was unclear from the meeting what position Arab League member states might take on the Bashir indictment. Their options range from repudiation

of the warrant and a call for its cancellation, he said, to seeking a Security Council deferment under Article 16 of the ICC statute. Because Qatar was hosting the Summit, he said, Qatar did not intend to take a formal position on the matter. But, he noted, "Article 16 must be discussed."

13. (C) Al-Mahmoud stated that two ICC employees recently appeared at the Embassy of Qatar in the Hague, asking that the Ambassador sign a pledge to assist in the arrest of Bashir, if the Sudanese leader came to Doha for the Summit. If the Qatari Ambassador did not sign the pledge, they threatened, his refusal to do so would be published on the ICC website. Under GOQ instructions, he did not sign, Al-Mahmoud said. A report about the Qatari Ambassador's refusal has not been posted on the website.

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HAMAS WILL NOT BE INVITED  
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14. (C) Ambassador reiterated the U.S. view that Hamas political leader Khaled Mish'al should not be invited to the Summit. Al-Mahmoud stated clearly that Mish'al had not been invited, and that only Arab countries and certain international organizations would be present. He cautioned, however, that Qatar could not be perceived as excluding Mish'al in response to outside pressure, as such a perception among the Arab states might lead to calls for Mish'al's participation.

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CONTINUED TENSIONS WITH EGYPT  
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15. (C) On a separate matter, Al-Mahmoud said that Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal had visited Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to invite Qatar's participation in one of two "mini-summits" to be held in advance of the Sharm Al Sheikh conference on Gaza aid. One was to include Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria; the second would have gathered Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar.

16. (C) Egypt objected to Qatar's inclusion in the second, however, accusing Qatar of unspecified attempts to undermine the Egyptian regime. Qatar offered to discuss the matter directly with Egypt, but the parties were unable to agree on holding a meeting. In the end, only one "mini-summit" was held, without Qatari participation. On the day of the mini-summit, the Amir went to Iran instead, as the special guest of the Economic Cooperation Organization's 10th Summit. LeBaron